

Independent Learning Newsletter Tips

Top 10 Tips For Parents To Manage And Communicate Expectations About Schoolwork And Results

Parents often have high expectations of their children in relation to how much homework they will do, and what results they will achieve in their studies. These expectations may result from cultural beliefs, personal experiences, desire for children to have better opportunities than their parents had and the like. Research shows that whilst parental expectations can play a significant part in children achieving high results, they can also contribute to high levels of student stress.

Some things to think about in relation to parental expectations include:

Understand your own motivations: Why do you want your child to do get particular marks in their studies? Is it because you have pressure from family/friends/society about what your child will achieve? Do you want them to follow in your career footsteps? Do you want them to have opportunities you never had as a child or young person? Understanding your own motivations will help you find balance in your expectations of your children.

Help your children to set realistic goals: Keep talking to your children about what they want to achieve, in individual subjects, at school overall and in other aspects of their life. Their career goals may mean they want to focus intensively on something like art or music, rather than maths or science. Helping them to identify their goals will enable them to determine what subjects they need to focus on and what marks they are likely to need, which means that effort can be concentrated on the areas which will help them to achieve their goals.

Be involved in your children's learning: Throughout the term talk to your children about what they are studying. Ask them to show you their bookwork and homework. The more you understand about what they are doing and how they are going along the way, the better you will be able to set and manage your expectations.

Make sure you really communicate what you expect: Many students feel like they are not meeting their parents' expectations. Often this is a result of poor communication about expectations by both parties. Reflect on your motivations (see 1 above) and think about how you communicate your expectations to your children. Remember to praise them for the effort they make rather than the results they achieve, this way they are motivated to keep on trying, even when learning is difficult.

Develop an understanding of the school's assessment and reporting structures: Assessment and reporting systems change over time and are different in different schools, states and countries. Making sure you really understand what your children's report means may help you to understand what they are actually achieving. Your school can explain these to you if need be. Sometimes students are excelling, but reporting structures don't clearly represent this to parents.

Remember nobody is perfect: Even the brightest, most highly motivated child will struggle at times. They may struggle to understand a particular topic or concept, or they may struggle with motivation, particularly for a subject they don't particularly enjoy. Problems with teachers or peers can also contribute. It is unrealistic that anyone can work with 100% effort all the time.

Provide practical homework and exam support: Provide practical help them to your children to enable them to access past papers or practise questions and work with them by things like proofreading and reviewing drafts, checking work and listening to speeches. Remember though, it is not your work, so don't make changes, rather make suggestions and provide guidance.

Spend time together doing something fun: Make sure your relationship with your child is about more than homework and study. Allocate some time to do fun things together. This is the time in which your child is most likely to open up to you about the things that they are struggling with and you can work out how best to help them. Ideas include going for a walk or run together, registering for a team sport, having a dinner date or going to a gallery or museum.

Support your child to do their best: You can do this by providing healthy, nutrient rich food; opportunities for exercise, rest and relaxation and an environment which is supportive of and conducive to study.

Keep alert for the physical and mental signs of stress: Familiarise yourself with how your child responds to stress. Do they withdraw? Act out? Work harder or stop working? When you notice that your child is stressed provide them opportunities to discuss what is worrying them and work with them to identify how you can help them. You may wish to involve the school counsellor, a teacher or tutor at this point.

So learn more this year about how to improve your results and be more efficient and effective with your schoolwork by going to the links section in your portal and opening the ELES handbook:

